

Living apart - celebrating together: the example of a Mexican transnational village

Engelbrecht, Beate

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Engelbrecht, B. (2014). Living apart - celebrating together: the example of a Mexican transnational village. *EthnoScripts: Zeitschrift für aktuelle ethnologische Studien*, 16(2), 85-105. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:gbv:18-8-7505>

Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter einer CC BY-SA Lizenz (Namensnennung-Weitergabe unter gleichen Bedingungen) zur Verfügung gestellt. Nähere Auskünfte zu den CC-Lizenzen finden Sie hier: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.de>

Terms of use:

This document is made available under a CC BY-SA Licence (Attribution-ShareAlike). For more information see: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>

Ethnologie und Migration

Jahrgang 16 Heft 2 | 2014

Beate Engelbrecht

Living apart – Celebrating together

The example of a Mexican transnational village

Ethnoscripts 2014 16 (2): 85-105

eISSN 2199-7942

Herausgeber:

Universität Hamburg
Institut für Ethnologie
Edmund-Siemers-Allee 1 (West)
D-20146 Hamburg
Tel.: 040 42838 6208
E-Mail: IfE@uni-hamburg.de
<http://www.ethnologie.uni-hamburg.de>

eISSN: 2199-7942

Dieses Werk ist lizenziert unter einer Creative Commons Licence 4.0
International: Namensnennung - Weitergabe unter gleichen Bedingungen.



Living apart – Celebrating together The example of a Mexican transnational village

Beate Engelbrecht

Introduction

Taking the concept of “transnational village” (Levitt 2001) as my point of departure, I am following the development of a village in Michoacán (Mexico) and its offshoot in Florida (USA) in my research. The village existed in pre-colonial times, was a *comunidad indígena* (indigenous community with special rights) in colonial times and is today a *tenencia* (community) of a *mestizo municipio* (mestizo dominated county). During the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) and the following Cristero War¹ in the first half of the 20th century the village went through difficult times. The socio-political-religious structure² was destroyed and never fully re-installed afterwards. The villagers lived mainly on farm work and pottery.

Since the forties, but increasingly since the eighties, mainly male inhabitants have migrated to Mexican cities and many more went *al Norte*. At the beginning many went firstly to California and then to other states in the US. Often, they stayed in a certain place only for a certain time and then moved on following the offers of work. Migrants and villagers were in constant contact, following each other. In this context, it is interesting that Rouse observes similar interaction coming to the following conclusion:

“Indeed, through the continuous circulation of people, money, goods, and information, the various settlements have become so closely woven together that, in an important sense, they have come to constitute a single community spread across a variety of sites, something I refer to as a ‘transnational migrant circuit’.” (Rouse 2002: 162)

With the passing of time, the Mexican migrants in the US married, had children and settled down. Before 9/11 in 2001 and before the financial crisis of 2008 they were able to earn quite a lot and to invest the money in houses, cars and trips back home. Nowadays, their financial situation is very difficult, more so if they are living illegally in the US. When the migrants have

- 1 During the Cristero War (1926-29) the ruling anti-clericalists (*agraristas*) were attacked by followers of the Catholic Church (*cristeros*) mainly in Western Mexico.
- 2 People had the possibility to take over a *cargo* (commission) for a saint and thus were rising in the political hierarchy. The most engaged ones were finally the leading persons of the village.

work, their work days are long and exhausting. The financial crises hit most of the migrants hard, resulting in their losing a lot of money. After 9/11 the US started to make their frontiers more secure and to build new barriers at the Mexican-US border, so it is not easy to return to the home village for a visit anymore.

In the village life is changing too. More and more people are working outside the village, being picked up in the early morning and also returning late. *Fiestas*, private and catholic ones, are the main activities beside the daily work. Private feasts concern mainly family life – locally and transnationally. Catholic feasts, mostly feasts for saints and Christ, are different; they involve villagers as well as outsiders. These feasts are organized by *cargueros* (commissioners) hosting the corresponding statues³ in their private houses for a whole year. Saints and Christ are venerated by catholic believers all over the world. They are addressed out of affliction or gratefulness. In catholic areas each village has a village patron at least and a feast is held at the saint's day. Very often, villages host more than one saint, in our case there are over 30 statues. The villagers visit them quite often and use the visit for chatting with other villagers as well. The organisation of a feast in the village is done with the help of relatives, co-parents, and neighbours of the commissioners and their relatives' etc. Living at the same place and having a flexible workday quite often, the helpers are able to contribute with their labour over a longer period of time, thus enjoying the companionship of each other.

In the US life is quite different. If they are lucky, the migrants are fully employed, men and women, fathers and mothers, they are working all day, all week. Or they have a part time job and have to be ready to work from one day to the next. Thus the relatives, co-parents and neighbours have not the time to assist at the commissioner's home for longer periods. Moreover, migrants from one village do not live close together anymore, or at least not in walking distance. Visiting each other means always that one has to make an appointment. Thus the organisation of the feasts differs substantially from the home village. As we will see, through the feasts various social networks are activated nowadays – locally, translocally and transnationally. I ask myself, seeing the busy life of the migrants and the heterogeneous social setting they are living in, where the migrants get their orientation from, what matters: their origin, their identity (which one), their feeling of belonging or ... and where do they feel socially at home – locally, translocally and transnationally? I will throw a light on these questions by taking the feast for Jesús Nazareno in Florida as an example.

3 In the village about 30 statues of saints and Christ are venerated. Mostly they stand in a private house where the responsible family lights candles and arrange some flowers all the time. Everybody can come and visit the statues and prayers are led.

The fiesta for Jesús Nazareno in the village

In the home village several images of Christ are venerated. Most of them are in *cargo* (commission). Cristo Rey and Jesús Nazareno are the most important ones. Cristo Rey is located on a hill side looking over the whole village. He gained popularity during the Cristero War and is very much promoted by the Church. The feast for him was introduced in the village by a priest in the late 1940s. Nowadays all the villagers are occupied with the organisation of the feast, adorning the village streets with carpets of flowers. As it is promoted by the state, it has turned into being the most important village feast for outsiders; about 5,000 guests visit the village on that day every year.



Photo by Beate Engelbrecht: Jesús Nazareno grande, Patamban 2007

The story of Jesús Nazareno is quite different. The first effigy of Jesús Nazareno was commissioned by a villager and manufactured by a well-known sculptor from Zamora at the beginning of the 20th century (Moctezuma Yano and Ruíz G. 2003: 169). As it was a private family who commissioned the sculpture, it is still privately owned. The effigy was very well made and people believe that Jesús Nazareno has miraculous powers. In 1969 believers from outside came to pray to him and have supported his veneration ever since. Thenceforward his popularity grew constantly and he gained fame in the wider region.

Jesús Nazareno is held in *cargo*, i.e. families can ask the owner to host the statue for one year. They are obliged to give daily access to believers who want to visit him. They have to illuminate him and to participate in all the events for which Jesús Nazareno is requested. Quite often believers solicit a special mass for him for various reasons. The statue has to be brought then to the church or even into another private home for the celebration. The *carguero* (commissioner) is obliged to accompany Jesús Nazareno wherever he goes. The summit of the *cargo* is the feast for Jesús itself. The feast is organised by the *carguero* but as it is such a miraculous image the whole village somehow takes part. Besides the helpers coming from the *carguero*'s social network, many people contribute voluntarily by bringing little or bigger gifts, helping in the preparations, taking over certain tasks such as the fabrication of adornments, etc. On the day of the feast a mass is read at the *carguero*'s house and hundreds of visitors come, paying a contribution and receiving bread, bananas, *conserva* (a sweet dish of calabash) and a small meal. The food is served on a very long table.



Video screen shot by Beate Engelbrecht: Veneration of Jesús Nazareno grande, Patamban 1998

The moment the table is set, distribution starts. The people come with adequate containers to collect the food. The moment the table is empty, it is re-set – all day long. An orchestra is invited to play and entertain waiting participants.⁴

4 See also Moctezuma Yano and Ruíz G. (2003)

Jesús Nazareno migrates to the US

One of the village migrants in Florida comes from a family who were always commissioners of saints and who had always taken over the corresponding *cargos*. His father decided to order a copy of Jesús Nazareno from a famous village sculptor for his son living in Florida. It took some time, but in 2006 the statue (*imagen*) was ready. As the son lives illegally in Florida, he did not dare to return to Mexico to bring the statue. He asked another migrant (from another place in Mexico) to go to the village and to bring the statue to Florida on his next trip to Mexico.



Photo by B. Engelbrecht: Jesús Nazareno, Fort Pierce 2009

The reasons for importing a copy of Jesús Nazareno were manifold. Mainly there were more and more people in Florida who wanted to take over the *cargo* in the sending village. But the list of future commissioners in the home village was long; people had to wait for years to become *carguero*. Moreover the migrants were not able to return to the home village easily anymore not only because of their illegal status in the US but also for financial reasons. Having a copy of Jesús Nazareno in Florida, they are independent and free to organise the feast for themselves. Additionally, the migrants have now the possibility to go somewhere all the time to pray when they are in need. Finally, through the statue the sending village is in certain ways always present in Florida.

The fiesta for Jesús Nazareno in Florida

In 2007 the owner of the effigy organised the first feast for Jesús Nazareno in Florida. He asked a priest to read a mass at his home and served a meal to the people present, mostly his family and villagers living nearby. Already the next year, there was somebody willing to take over the *cargo*. From then on, the *cargo* was installed. Every year more elements were added and more people attended the feast.

In 2012, the *cargo* of Jesús Nazareno in Florida was taken over by a member of “my” family, whom I have known for more than 30 years. Since 1981 I have been doing research about *fiestas* in the home village. In 1989 I also started to use film in my work: Together with cameraman Manfred Krüger we documented the ritual circle from Candlelight till Holy Week, the feast for Jesús Nazareno being a part of it.⁵ In 1998 I recorded the feast for Jesús Nazareno in the home village on video. The feast was then organised by an uncle of the actual *carguero*. Some family members now living in Florida were still living in the home village at that time and participated in the organisation of the feast there. The mother of the actual *carguero* and my main informant and friend appreciated the idea that I would come for five weeks, assist them in the preparations and that I would document everything with the video camera. As she has known me and my film work for many years, she was well aware of my interest and of what she could expect in return – mainly several DVDs with an edited version of the recordings.

I had visited the family in Florida every second year since 1998. I saw how they were living, how they were working, and how little time was left for meeting each other. One important problem is distance, living in apartments or houses in different streets, in different parts of the town, in different places in the state or in other states. Meeting without having a car (or a driver’s licence – which is difficult to get if you are an illegal immigrant in the US) is nearly impossible. Casual meetings in the village such as going to the plaza or the church do not exist. One has always to organise something. The *cargo* of Jesús Nazareno is therefore an occasion to meet more often informally as the statue stands in a private house which one can visit all day normally and as there are regular prayers each month.

Preparation of the fiesta – Short meetings

The feast has to be prepared: the church service has to be ordered, a location rented, people invited, adornments fabricated, and food prepared. A core group of four families looks after the *cargo* of Jesús Nazareno. They all come from the home village except for one man who married into it. They have

⁵ I produced four films about the home village, one on pottery (Engelbrecht 1997) and three on the Candelaria (Engelbrecht 1995), the Carnival (2010), and the Holy Week (Engelbrecht 1992).

taken over certain responsibilities: The owner of the statue looks after the statue itself and the traditional dancing; one man cooks the meat, another one organises the music, the photographing and videographing of the event, and the last one assists the owner. The core group gives the *cargueros* advice, helps at certain times, and takes over certain duties. They all live in the same area of the town and are thus able to meet each other more often. The *cargo* of Jesús Nazareno is a task which binds them together.

The *cargueros* are responsible for the organisation and they need many people to help them, to prepare and manage the feast, and they need people to attend the feast. Therefore, the *carguero* and his wife were running around for weeks to invite helpers and guests to the feast. They travelled far, visiting people two to three hours away, mainly migrants from the home village and their families. On one weekend, the *carguero* together with men of the core group drove around the town, up and down, and invited people to the feast while also asking for a financial contribution. They took with them a plate covered with a table napkin with the crown of thorns of Jesús Nazareno on top adorned with some flowers and a tambour. In the home village young relatives of the *carguero* walked through the village for several days knocking on all the doors. In both places they reminded the villagers respectively migrants of the feast and asked for contributions. In Florida, when touring the town, they also invited neighbours who happened to be there, they invited people from different origins which had attended the feast before, and they invited people they happened to meet that day. In most cases, a member of the family they visited brought some money to give to Jesús Nazareno; they and their children kissed the crown and they started chatting with each other.



Video screen shot by Beate Engelbrecht: Kissing the crown of Jesús Nazareno, Fort Pierce 2013

In one case, a shop owner who is very attached to Jesús Nazareno, introduced this group to other Mexican shop owners nearby, inviting them also to the feast and asking for a contribution. Everybody can come to the feast; everybody can invite anybody else to come to the feast. In this way, the community around Jesús Nazareno is growing continuously and becoming constantly more diverse.



Video screen shot by Beate Engelbrecht: Asking for a contribution in a Mexican grocery shop, Fort Pierce 2013

The adornments for the multi-purpose hall where the feast was taking place had to be made. That year, a sister of the *carguero* made a *manda* (vow) that if she was cured of an illness she would take over this task. She started half a year before the feast looking for the material, and ordered some accessories from her home village which were brought to her by migrants returning from there. All the adornments were made manually. Her sister and a very good friend helped her. She herself sewed 8 meters long curtains to be hanged in the multi-purpose hall. They met many evenings, thus preparing everything in their leisure time. One evening, her brother came and they started to talk about how to arrange the curtains. As the sister of the *carguero* could not be present when they had to hang the curtains because she had to work, she explained what to do to her sister and a friend as well as her mother and brother. When looking later at my video recordings, I could see the different reactions of the people present. The sister was very enthusiastic, the brother amused and elated, and the mother very thoughtful and at the end pleased. The mother was thinking very much about what the other people in Florida, in the migrant communities in the US, but mostly in the home village would say about the feast.



Video screen shot by Beate Engelbrecht: Explaining how to hang the curtain at the feast, Fort Pierce 2013

500 participants were expected to come to the feast. For this occasion three cows were given to the *carguero* and slaughtered by him and relatives and friends. One member of the core group cooked most of the meat at his private home over night and brought it to the multi-purpose hall in due time. The day before the feast several women met in the house of the *carguero* to prepare special food for the mesa (table, see below). The preparation of the food took the whole day – in the home village it takes more than a week – and everybody can participate.



Video screen shot by Beate Engelbrecht: Women helping in the night before the feast, Fort Pierce 2013

This time not many people were there as most of the women had to work all day. Only in the evening did more women come, mainly relatives, co-parents, and neighbours of the *cargueros*. Little by little also the husbands arrived. They were helping or sitting together chatting.

The preparations which took place at several places gave the migrants and their families a reason to go out, to meet with each other, to chat, to exchange news – just to socialise. These short social meetings helped to keep the local social network lively.

Celebration – Temporal companionship

The celebration of the feast consisted of several events: the service in the church and in the multi-purpose hall the dinner, the *mesa*, the traditional dance of the *viejitos*, and the dance (*baile*) of the people.

The multi-purpose hall was quite big (for a family feast), 50 tables with 10 chairs each had been decorated in violet and white (the colours of the Lenten Season) with the produced decorations. At one side long curtains were hanging from the ceiling to frame Jesús Nazareno adequately. As the statue is very small, it was important to mark where it was standing. On another side a huge stillage was put up for the live music which was to play later in the evening and a second one for playback music which played full blast all the time. Behind the music equipment tables were set up to serve the food. And above all a huge American flag was hanging, reminding everyone where they were.



Photo by Beate Engelbrecht: Preparing the multi-purpose hall the day before the feast, Fort Pierce 2013

After the church service the guests went to the multi-purpose hall which was filling quickly. Most people came in groups and occupied a table together. They came from different places in Florida and even from North Carolina.

They were migrants from the home village and their families, they were colleagues from work, they were neighbours of the *cargueros*, they were friends and friends of friends, and they were Michoacanos and Mexicans, and Latinos born in the US. Most of the guests were middle aged; there were some younger ones and a huge amount of children. But comparing it with the feast in the home village, it was obvious that the older generation was missing. Another difference to the home village was that not everybody knew all the guests. It was quite a heterogeneous group meeting. Despite the loud music, all the guests were chatting intently.

The *carguero*'s family wanted to create a good atmosphere from the start. Therefore they were very eager to serve the food quickly. In 2012 the dinner was served very late and the guests were hungry. Gossip was the consequence. Serving food is a very delicate task. In the home village it is the responsibility of older women. Here in Florida, there are no older women who could take over this task. Observing the serving later, I was just fascinated. Several men, relatives of the *carguero* but also other men present served non-alcoholic drinks quickly (they were not allowed to serve alcoholic beverages) going from table to table. In the back the person cooking the meat, had especially invited women from another town in Florida, and many helpers from the previous day served the dishes. The *carguero* himself and his two sisters took over the lead in serving the dishes at the tables. Other men and women joined the serving line, even people not from the village, a work colleague or just a guest.



Video screen shot by Beate Engelbrecht: Serving the dinner at the feast, Fort Pierce 2013

The serving went on very smoothly, the food was well received, and everybody enjoyed the meal. Being together for a while, seeing each other, being able to chat and exchange news was the main purpose of attending the feast.

It was an occasion to strengthen the translocal community of people originating from Michoacán and to make the local community much more heterogeneous.

After having served the meal it was time for a special custom: *la mesa*. The feast commemorates the Last Supper of Jesus. Therefore, in the home village special food is offered to the whole village.



Video screen shot by Beate Engelbrecht: *La mesa* at the feast for Jesús Nazareno grande, Patamban 1998

It is the main event of the *fiesta* and takes all day. Now in Florida it is reduced to one episode of the whole event. One could feel time pressure. Long tables standing in front of Jesús Nazareno were set up quickly with typical vegetarian food (because of the Lenten fast) as in the home village. A migrant baker from the home village had donated the traditional bread, bananas had been ordered in big quantities, and *conserva* (a sweet dish made from calabash) from the home village. Additionally the food which had been prepared in the *carguero's* house the day before was put in styrofoam boxes and laid out on the table. The partakers, originating mainly from the home village, pay the *cargueros* a small contribution and get in return a certain share of the food. For the migrants of the home village *la mesa* is an important part of the feast. And wherever this feast is celebrated in the US, *conserva* is imported from the home village where it is cooked in large quantities by the *carguero's* family. The migrants are constantly talking about how the *conserva* was brought to the US. In our case the *carguero* went to the village to bring it, in other cases villagers meet migrants at the border, or they travel to the US to take part in the feast. This episode of the feast addresses primarily the transnational village.



Photo by Beate Engelbrecht: Preparing *la mesa* at the feast for Jesús Nazareno, Fort Pierce 2013

After the *mesa* and the rearrangement of the multi-purpose hall the *viejitos* danced. *La danza de los viejitos* (the dance of the old men) is widespread in Michoacán and thus addresses many of the migrants. The dancers are dressed in Purhépecha costumes, i.e. represent the indigenous population of Michoacán, and they dance like old men. It is danced on several occasions, but in the home village certainly not during Lenten season. In Florida the migrants have decided to integrate the dance in the feast for Jesús Nazareno as there are not many occasions to perform it. Some weeks before the feast men and children begin to meet in the afternoon or evening to practice the dance.



Video screen shot by Beate Engelbrecht: The dancers practicing in the evening, Fort Pierce 2013

At the feast, first the men danced and after a while they integrated the *cargueros* in their performance. Much more time was given afterwards to the children. They performed the traditional dance with enthusiasm and at the end were throwing candies into the audience. Even people from other places were attracted and could identify themselves with the dance. Thus the dance being a cultural marker in Michoacán is becoming one in Florida also, but somehow in a different way.



Video screen shot by Beate Engelbrecht: The dancers performing the dance of the *viejitos* at the feast, Fort Pierce 2013

The feast ended with the dance – the *baile*. Two music groups played and everybody, first the children, later in the evening the grown-ups were dancing as long as possible. People were relaxed and enjoying the feast. The feast ended early, as all people had to have left the hall by 11 p.m. The organisers had to remove all their utensils and decorations, the employees of the hall started immediately to dismantle the tables, remove the chairs and clean the hall.

I was thinking about how I could categorise the event in social terms and came up with the idea of temporal companionship, thus pointing out that the event as well the living together in Florida is a temporal occurrence. Nobody knows if s/he will be able to participate next time. But for the time being, the feast of Jesús Nazareno is an occasion where the migrants can meet, chat, and keep up social relations, not only local ones, but also translocal and transnational ones.

Reproduction – Lasting memorabilia

An event like the feast for Jesús Nazareno is no longer a local event only; it is spreading out and gaining translocal and transnational relevance. And it is no longer a momentary event. Lasting memorabilia are produced and kept for a long time. The decorations on the tables were made to remember the event.



Photo by Beate Engelbrecht: The table decoration at the feast for Jesús Nazareno, Fort Pierce 2013

The guests were invited to take them home. The sisters of the *carguero* had also ordered *servilletas* (napkins) with the face of Jesús Nazareno and the name of the *carguero*'s family to be given to the guests. So the participants had something to take away as a souvenir, something with which to remember the feast at home. Additionally, the local videographer recorded the feast. He is a member of the core group of the *cargo* of Jesús Nazareno and started to document the feast in 2009. He produces the videos because he likes doing it and because he can sell the DVDs to migrants who then send them to their relatives in the home village and also to relatives living in other places in the

US. And the migrants are waiting longingly to receive DVDs from the other places too. The exchange of DVDs is now a common element of the information flow in the transnational community.



Photo by Beate Engelbrecht: The altar of Jesús Nazareno at the feast, Fort Pierce 2013

Many guests were taking photos and videos with their mobile phone or iPad too. Some of them are members of facebook and were uploading photos immediately, thus sharing the event with their friends, their families, and their virtual social network. Later on, there might pop up little films on YouTube often taken by the local videographer and used as teasers to promote the DVD. These films are creating some sort of competition between the different locations where the feast takes place as everybody is interested to see

how the feast is celebrated elsewhere. Competition means here also being related to each other, being interested in each other's doings. Reproducing the feast by taking images and distributing them via DVD, mobile phone and Internet means that memorabilia are created which are fixed, long-standing, and widespread.

Creating points of orientation

Migrants – legal and illegal – are always living in insecurity; the financial crisis (2008) has destroyed the dream of being able to settle down after many years of hard work and the 9/11 attack has terminated the liberal treatment of illegal migrants. The daily fight for survival is the main concern of the migrants. The relations with the home village, with their family are basic but not central in the daily fight. The place of origin, the locality where migrants grew up, is important, but ethnic identity in the case studied didn't matter at all. Living in a quite mixed environment, meeting people of diverse origin, ethnicity, class, age, gender, faith needs some points of orientation which address a variety of people. The installation of the *cargo* for Jesús Nazareno in Florida seems to serve this purpose.

Jesús Nazareno is an important symbol of the Catholic religion, a globally widespread religion. For the catholic migrants mostly of Latino origin living in a small town in Florida it is therefore easy to relate themselves with the *cargo* of Jesús, the corresponding ceremonies, and the feast. It is something they can link with their own experiences. Only those migrants and moreover children of migrants who are not catholic sometimes have difficulty in joining these festivities.⁶ Younger people who grew up in Florida without having seen feasts for saints, who have not danced traditional dances, who have rarely or never been in the home village seem to have no interest in the feast for Jesús Nazareno. It will be interesting to see in future if this will change as the children take part so enthusiastically in the feast and if the feast will be a point of orientation for them then.

The integration of cultural performances coming from larger areas in Mexico such as the dance of the *viejitos* opens up fields of interaction and a possibility of creating a new cultural marker by and for the older people. The following dancing where everybody participates serves additionally the integration of this diverse community. The feast and Jesús Nazareno seem to give them a point of orientation for the time being. As these feasts are spreading over the US they might be points of orientation of the translocal community also.

Coming back to our question, it is interesting to see that the migrants of the home village have successfully installed in Florida a tradition from a

6 Elizondo 2000: 82 points out that the growing amount of mixed marriages concerning religion arouse new problems which are difficult to overcome.

very specific place in Mexico. A growing amount of people from other places participate in the event, thus initiating a process of converting the feast into something new, something which is relevant to people living in Florida, a new social life-world (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2013: 20). The feast serves as a new point of orientation, a new feeling of belonging, leaving the question of origin and identity somehow behind. Pfaff-Czarnecka (2012: 21; 2013: 22-23) discusses the importance of shared experiences, the process of 'taking possession' of a new social space, and the creation of new common knowledge for gaining a feeling of belonging together. In the case of Jesús Nazareno it seems that the core group, looking after the statue all the time, advising the new *cargueros*, training the dancers, advertising the feast in the region, and maintaining the relations with people living farther away care for the installation of a point of orientation and therefore a feeling of belonging together.

Generating togetherness

Looking at the living situation of the migrants in Florida and analysing the feast for Jesús Nazareno, I came to distinguish three social networks playing a role in daily life and the feast: a transnational one, a translocal and a local network. There is the transnational village comprising the home village and the migrants in the US. They all are in constant contact; they are quite well informed about each other, about what is going on at the other places. Copies of the statue of Jesús Nazareno have been transferred to California, Colorado, Utah, and Florida. People of the home village are helping the migrants in the performance of the feast by sending special utensils and even food to the US whereas the migrants are supporting the feasts in the home village by sending money, going there for a visit, and helping in the preparations. Levitt, writing about transnational villagers, points out that the transnational social fields encompass all aspects of life (2001:9), that in transnational social networks (2001:10) people in a sending village are linked with migrants living at different places in the receiving countries and migrants at different places are also linked among themselves.

Freitag (2005) uses the term translocality also for transnational settings, arguing that there are many borders which are not national borders which might be more relevant in crossing than the national ones. Anthias (2009:7) discusses the significance of the border in transnational settings also. She introduces the term translocational positionality, pointing out:

"A translocational positionality is structured by the interplay of different locations relating to gender, ethnicity, race and class (amongst others), and their at times contradictory effects (Anthias 2002). Positionality combines a reference to social position (as a set of effectivities: as outcome) and social positioning (as a set of practices, actions and meanings: as process). That is,

positionality is the space at the intersection of structure (social position/social effects) and agency (social positioning/meaning and practice)." (Anthias 2009: 12)

Brickwell and Datta take also translocality as a point of departure for a larger discussion of translocal geographies. For them, "Research on translocality primarily refers to how social relationships across locales shape transnational migrant networks, economic exchanges and diasporic space" (2011: 3) thus stressing the point of an individual position in several deterritorialised networks. In contrast to the concept of translocality, Brickwell and Datta are much more interested in the geographical aspects of migration:

"We examine translocal geographies as a set of dispersed connections across spaces, places and scales which become meaningful only in their corporeality, texture and materiality – as the physical and social conditions of particular constructions of the local, become significant sites of negotiations in migrants' everyday lives." (Brickwell and Datta 2011: 6)

I find the discussion of translocational positionality (Freitag and Anthias) and translocal geographies (Brickwell and Datta) very helpful for making a distinction between "transnational" and "translocal" in the Mexican/Florida case. As the national border between Mexico and the US is a wall for illegal migrants since they are not able to cross it easily nowadays, I use the term transnational for the social network of people from one village living at different places in Mexico, the U.S. and elsewhere and distinguish it from a translocal setting inside the US. I prefer to follow the concept of translocal geographies as it offers some elements for the interpretation of our example and understanding of the interactions of migrants on a translocal level. The migrants have come to Florida in order to work. During the week no time is left over for visiting, chatting, keeping up a social life. Weekends are always full of family activities. As the migrants of the home village live apart from each other, the feast for Jesús Nazareno is one occasion to meet on a translocal level. Families participating in the feast are not only coming from the place where the *carguero* is living but also from other places in Florida and neighbouring states. They are of mixed origins, migrants of the village are married to other Mexicans, Latinos or (even) Americans, or the participants originate from different villages and towns in Michoacán or other Mexican states. The feast for Jesús Nazareno thus brings together all these people who do not fit into a clear category of origin, identity, or belonging.

On the local level, the setting is even more diverse. There are many people who are being integrated by the activities around Jesús Nazareno, the monthly prayers, the feast, and other celebrations. Besides the migrants of the home village and their increasingly more diverse families, there are the

colleagues from work and the neighbours, there are also people having participated in earlier years and their friends. On the local level there is a much greater diversity in class and ethnicity, all of which meet at the feast and thus generate temporarily a very liberal and flexible feeling of togetherness.

Pfaff-Czarnecka (2013: 13) makes a marked difference between belonging to a collective (*Zugehörigkeit*) and togetherness (*Zusammengehörigkeit*). This difference helps greatly in the interpretation of the example discussed. In the context of the transnational village the various activities support the feeling of belonging to the village whereas in the context of the translocal community in the US and more so the local community in the town, activities around Jesús Nazareno mainly generate a feeling of togetherness, which might be temporal but which might have the potential to develop also into a more consistent community.

References

- Anthias, Floya (2009) Translocational belonging, identity and generation: Questions and problems in migration and ethnic studies. *Finnish Journal of Ethnicity & Migration* 4 (1), pp. 6-15.
- Brickell, Katherine and Ayona Datta (2011) Introduction: Translocal geographies. In: Brickell, Katherine and Ayona Datta (eds.) *Translocal geographies: Spaces, places, connections*. Farnham et al.: Ashgate, pp. 3-18.
- Engelbrecht, Beate (2010) *Karneval in Patamban – Michoacán, Mexiko*. Institut für den Wissenschaftlichen Film Göttingen, Video, Originalton und Kommentar, 27 min. (German and English).
- Engelbrecht, Beate (1997) *Töpferinnen in Patamban – Arbeitsalltag einer Großfamilie, Michoacán, Mexiko*. Institut für den Wissenschaftlichen Film Göttingen (C 1967), 16 mm, Originalton und Kommentar, 83 min. (German and English).
- Engelbrecht, Beate (1995) *Mariä Lichtmeß in Patamban, Michoacán, Mexiko*. Institut für den Wissenschaftlichen Film Göttingen (C 1895), 16 mm, Originalton und Kommentar, 32 min. (German, English and Spanish).
- Engelbrecht, Beate (1992) *Semana Santa – The Holy Week in Patamban (Purhépecha, Michoacán, Mexico)*. Institut für den Wissenschaftlichen Film Göttingen (E 3135), 16 mm, Originalton und Kommentar, 130 min. (German, English and Spanish).
- Freitag, Ulrike (2005) Translokalität als ein Zugang zur Geschichte globaler Verflechtungen. In: *H-Soz-u-Kult* 10.06.2005. <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/forum/2005-06-001.pdf> [accessed 17.07.2014].
- Levitt, Peggy (2001) *The transnational villagers*. Berkeley et al.: University of California Press.

- Moctezuma Yano, Patricia and Juan Carlos Ruíz G. (2003) Migración y devoción: El culto „Al Jesús Nazareno“ de Patamban, Michoacán. *Estudios michoacanos* XI, pp. 146-214.
- Pfaff-Czarnecka, Joanna (2013) Multiple belonging and the challenges to biographic navigation. MMG Working Paper 13-05: Göttingen: Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity. <http://www.mmg.mpg.de/publications/working-papers/2013/wp-13-05/> [accessed 17.07.2014].
- Pfaff-Czarnecka, Joanna (2012) *Zugehörigkeit in der mobilen Welt. Politiken der Verortung*. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag.
- Rouse, Roger (2002) Mexican migration and the social space of postmodernism. In: Inda, Jonathan Xavier and Renato Rosaldo (eds.) *The anthropology of globalization*. pp. 157-171 Oxford: Blackwell. http://illinois.academia.edu/JonathanInda/Books/530126/The_Anthropology_of_Globalization_A_Reader [accessed 17.07.2014].

Beate Engelbrecht is anthropologist and visual anthropologist. Since over 30 years she does research on a Mexican village in Michoacán, its economic development, its fiesta organisation and the migration of the villagers to the U.S. At the present she is Senior Research Partner at the Max-Planck-Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity.